

SENATE RESOLUTION 129

By Lundberg

A RESOLUTION to urge the University of Tennessee board of trustees to require the collection of an objective metric of postsecondary readiness assessment scores as a part of their student application process.

WHEREAS, for fifty-nine years, the University of Tennessee required the submission of a standardized test score by prospective students for admission to the institution; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the University of Tennessee made the decision to temporarily make the submission of standardized test scores optional: "In an effort to make the application process for undergraduate admission easier for prospective students and their families during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, will make submitting standardized test scores (ACT/SAT) optional for the fall 2021 admissions cycle"; and

WHEREAS, the University of Tennessee then announced the following year a five-year continuation of a test-optional pilot program because "Universities across the country are increasingly making standardized test scores optional"; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly has made it a priority to ensure that Tennessee students emerge from our K-12 public education system college-ready; and

WHEREAS, to determine college readiness in our students, the State of Tennessee has required that eleventh-grade students enrolled in Tennessee public schools complete a postsecondary readiness assessment prior to graduation; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee requires a certain score on these assessments to be eligible for the HOPE Scholarship and other merit-based scholarships offered by the State; and

WHEREAS, understanding the importance of equitable access to objective, standardized testing for college readiness and scholarship eligibility, especially for underprivileged students, the State of Tennessee has provided funding to cover the costs of such assessments since 2018; and

WHEREAS, as reported by Utah State University – Digital Commons, the ACT Composite score is positively associated with college graduation rates. As ACT scores increase, the probability of graduating from college will be increased by 11.97 percentage points; and

WHEREAS, in *Measuring Success*, University of Minnesota researchers Paul Sackett and Nathan Kuncel found that combining high school GPA and standardized test scores offers a better predictor of college GPA, with a correlation just under 0.80, than high school GPA alone; and

WHEREAS, these standardized tests also offer a check on grade inflation and add value to a student's application under conditions of discrepant achievement; and

WHEREAS, an objective standard ensures that the admissions process remains merit-based and constant across all applicants; and

WHEREAS, requiring these standardized tests gives our flagship university a competitive advantage over universities that have decided to no longer require them, as students with strong scores will want to apply to a school where such tests are considered; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 9, Part 2, gives the decision-making power over admissions standards to the University of Tennessee board of trustees and not to the university admissions office or the president of the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Governor Bill Lee said, "As a business person, I know that you cannot improve what you don't measure, and so measurement is important. But I also know if you

measure the wrong thing or you measure too much, then you actually have a negative outcome."; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby urge the University of Tennessee board of trustees to use the decision-making power entrusted to them by the General Assembly to require the university to obtain the objective metric of postsecondary readiness assessment scores, such as ACT or SAT scores, as a part of their student application process.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution be prepared and transmitted to each member of the University of Tennessee board of trustees and the president of the University of Tennessee.